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COMING JUDGMENT

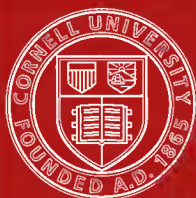
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COMING JUDGMENT

BY

J. H. GARRATT

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PREFACE.

In putting forth this testimony the writer disclaims all attempt at literary effort or effect, realizing it would be utterly out of place, even if he were able, which he is not.

It is a serious matter, and therefore seriously dealt with. Utmost plainness of speech has been intentionally used. The book is for instruction, not entertainment. There has been a searching of foundations, in order that the false may be shown up and the true brought to light; that we may get down through all shifting and unstable "sands" of tradition to the bed-rock of God's Word, "that liveth and abideth forever."

The writer is not a novice, having been a "believer" for nearly thirty years, though with many years of most unfaithful walk, falling into grievous sin and consequent obscurity of faith and testimony. In fact, the fall into sin was occasioned largely by the existence of the very evils spoken of in this testimony; and thus, after restoration, there has been the desire to give the warning cry, for having felt the heavy chastening rod of God, and thus been brought to renewed repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, there has been an "enlightening of the eyes of the understanding" also, especially on seeing the dulness of conscience among Christians concerning personal sinning, and the general indifference to coming judgment. How can the world be expected to have any fear of coming judgment when Christians do n't appear to believe in it, or Christian preachers proclaim it?

Having waited for years for some one else to do this, and only one or two small tracts being known to exist on the subject, very insufficiently stated, the writer now puts forth this, with the prayer that God would overrule anything contrary to His mind and Word, and use

it to open the eyes of His dear children to these things, that they may separate from all that is evil, and honor Him by a renewed allegiance to His Word.

These prefatory remarks will be better understood, perhaps, after reading the book.

THE AUTHOR.

COMING JUDGMENT.

The Word of God teaches definitely the facts of sin and salvation, of judgment and perdition. Although it is taught that every soul of man must give account to God, yet the phrase "great and general judgment" is not found in the Scriptures. It was coined by preachers of the past generation.

There have been in the past several judgments, as the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, etc., undoubtedly premonitory of greater judgment to come.

It is stated in II Peter 3:7 that the world, once destroyed by water, will be destroyed again by a judgment of fire.

Although all must appear before God, yet it is true that those who are in Christ Jesus will never come into a condemnatory judgment (see Rom. 8:1), their sins having been judged by the Lord Jesus on the cross, when he died as their sin-offering. But their works must be tried by fire, as a preliminary to their receiving rewards from His hand.

In Peter's epistles it is said that "judgment must begin from the house of God."

Paul speaks of the present age as *man's* judgment

day (I Cor. 4: 3, margin) in distinction, undoubtedly, from God's judgment day, which is still future.

Evidently God is to bring different classes into judgment at different times. There is the judgment of the living nations recorded in Matt. 25, at the time "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory;" the judgment of Christendom at the close of this age; then the judgment of all the wicked dead, raised from the dead for judgment, — this at the close of the thousand years' reign of Christ with his church.

It is not proposed to speak at length concerning all these judgments, but that one only that most concerns the church at present, viz., the judgment of, or "cutting off" of, Gentile Christendom at the close of, and which will constitute the closing of, this age or dispensation.

In the eleventh chapter of Romans we read that Israel is, because of unbelief, cut off from something styled an olive root, and the Gentiles grafted in in their place. What is this olive tree trunk upon which this cutting off and ingrafting takes place? Evidently it is dispensational privilege or blessing.

Israel had enjoyed this blessing ever since they were a nation. At the first they had a God-given law, tabernacle, sacrifices, and ordinances. God-given leaders and prophets. Yet from the first, also, there were continual lapses into idolatry, and the "unbelief" was more and more manifested in ever-increasing perversion of the truth, till when Christ came there was but little of the original sacrifices and ordinances to be seen. There was a general following of "traditions" instead of the

definite God-given "law and testimony." This caused such spiritual blindness that they failed to recognize their Messiah when he appeared, resulting in his rejection and crucifixion. Then came their "cutting off" from this dispensational privilege, and the transfer of this privilege to the Gentile world, — styled ingrafting into the olive root. But it is accompanied by a definite warning (vs. 21, 22) that if they continue not in His "goodness," *they too shall be cut off*, which practically is a prophecy, as history proves, that just that thing will in the end happen.

Probably one reason why the teaching in this chapter is so little recognized is the taking it to mean individual salvation, as if Christ were the "olive tree" into which believers are ingrafted individually. But that it cannot be is evident, for there is no "cutting off" of believers who are really once "baptized by one spirit into the one body." Besides Israel as a whole is spoken of, therefore it is the Gentiles as a whole also that are "grafted in." The olive root that Israel is cut off from isn't Christ or salvation, for they were not in Him, nor were they saved. It is therefore evident that it is dispensational privilege or blessing.

What has occurred in the Gentile world during the two thousand years since this transfer of dispensational privilege was made?

The gospel has been preached and Christianity has grown and spread, like the tree in the parable, till it has covered the whole earth. It is seen in the form of great religious systems, calling themselves

the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the Greek church, the Roman Catholic church, and the Protestant church with its many subdivisions, all together constituting "Christendom." The true church or company of genuine believers is scattered among this great mass contained and hidden in it. That is, along with the true are a vast number of spurious "professors" forming a "mixed multitude" as there was in Israel throughout their career. So there is a parallel between Israel and this Gentile religious Christendom, but little recognized, yet becoming more and more marked, and which will sooner or later end in a like "cutting off" in judgment, and according to the same Scripture, Israel will again be grafted in, and dealt with in a new dispensation.

In proportion as Christianity has grown and spread it has been corrupted, *i. e.*, as to the general mass. From time to time there have been small companies of Christians that have come out from the corrupt systems and returned to a more or less scriptural purity of doctrine and practice.

Leaving aside for the time the great Greek and Romish Church systems, which it is easy to see are filled with ecclesiastical evils and unscriptural practices, let us look for a little at the Protestant Church system and inquire whether it, too, may not be full of similar evils.

The first and foremost thing presented to the notice of the world by this great church system is "public worship." When, let us ask at the outset, is there any

warrant for the "maintenance of public worship?" There is none. It is simply traditional; from the mind of man, not from God.

Whatever may have been the cause or excuse for it at the first, it exists to-day the most prominent of the whole string of ecclesiastical evils, and out of which, and necessitated by which, most of the others have come into existence and continuance.

If asked why there is a necessity for the maintenance of "public worship" many will answer, "Why, to preach the gospel to be sure." But that is not God's appointed way. There is no hint, much less a definite teaching, that the unsaved are expected to come to church to be preached to. Neither is there any hint that in Christians meeting together the first object of such meeting should be to preach to the unsaved. God has appointed and given to the church "evangelists," who are to go forth to preach to the unsaved. Christians are evidently expected to meet by themselves. Not that the unsaved are to be excluded, but their coming in is incidental, not appointed.

Along with the supposed necessity for public worship there naturally exists the necessity for public buildings of worship, salaried ministers, assistants, choirs, sextons, etc., requiring the expenditure of immense sums of money that evidently God never intended should be turned in those directions. (The only "collections" we read of in the Acts or Epistles were for poor saints.)

Not only in these ecclesiastical things is there a

departure from the teaching of the Word, but the Protestant church is more and more corrupting the gospel or doctrine of Christianity as found in the Word of God.

Right here it might be well to make a concise statement of what the gospel really is, before speaking of the false gospels, etc.

THE GOSPEL.

In a word it is the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the redemption and salvation of lost sinners.

We know little of the beginning of "sin" or "lawlessness" as it is defined in the first Epistle of John. But from Peter's Epistle we learn that a company of angels, probably through pride and desire for greater power, "Kept not their first estate but left their own habitation," *i. e.*, it would seem, usurped to themselves a higher position than God had given. They thus "fell" and are reserved unto judgment, no redemption being possible for them. Their leader, the devil, instigated our first parents with this same desire for greater knowledge and therefore supposed power, and so they also gave up their allegiance to God, and stepped over the bounds he had assigned them, and thus became sinners.

But immediately in this case God brings in a wonderful provision for redemption, showing that He had foreseen the fall of man, and had seen how it would give an occasion for the working out of such an exhibition of His love in a plan of redemption as would

greatly magnify all his excellencies, and so in the end cause that work of Satan, intended to be only evil and damaging to God, to be turned by the infinite power and wisdom of God into great good for His creatures and greater glory to Himself.

God made man originally "in his likeness," *i. e.*, morally and mentally—a thinking, emotional being, able to reason and choose, capable of loving and hating. He put the first pair in a beautiful garden, the finished work of His creation, where He had pronounced everything "very good." In these surroundings they could enjoy to the utmost the beauties of His creation, and enjoy one another, and above all enjoy unhindered communion with Himself. He gave them authority over all things, yet by giving them one command, they were made to recognize the fact that they were subject to one higher than themselves. This was a state of innocence and they were on probation.

But temptation entered, they listened to the lie of Satan, and disobeying the one command given by God, fell from their state of innocence and consequent communion with God. Not only so, but they lost their holy nature, and became inherently sinful. They "died" spiritually, as God had threatened they should. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

This testing of their allegiance in itself considered was an honor, and had they not yielded, undoubtedly their fellowship and communion with God would have been all the closer. But they put their supposed interests ahead of obedience to God's requirements.

They thus became spiritually "dead," and this state is handed down to every member of their posterity. Thus are sinners "lost;" for this condition of spiritual death will end in the "second death" or eternal punishment, for this is the sure word of God. For will a holy God forgive a guilty sinner? Will He in any way give him back his forfeited life? It may be asked, "Can He do it if He would?" Must not the sinner stand forever the penalty due his guilt and sin, in order to vindicate the righteous justice of God, and show the utter abhorrence his perfect holiness has toward sin?

Just here begins the wondrous story of grace, that unspeakable glorious plan of redemption resulting in the salvation of many of the fallen race, and the final establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth. God has forestalled the sinners' need, and provided a Savior, "mighty to save." God is not taken by surprise, He has a plan ready, He has found a ransom. Immediately upon the sinning of our first parents, salvation is promised through One to come who should "bruise the serpent's head." This One does not come from the ranks of fallen man as such; for can one sinner ransom another? Neither does he come from the ranks of the holy angels, for no angel however exalted can atone by his life or death for human guilt. It is God himself, in the person of His Son, "taking on the likeness of sinful flesh," *i. e.*, becoming one of our race, and so being both God and man, by His death on the cross, fully satisfies the just demands of the holy but broken law. It was necessary that He should be both God and

man, that He might become a mediator between God and man.

It was necessary that He should be sinless, so being without sin himself, He could "bear our sins in His own body on the tree," and thus make a righteous and perfect sacrifice that could be accepted by God.

Thus God himself has borne the penalty of our sins, and His righteous justice is legally satisfied. There is nothing more that can be required. Full reconciliation has been made, which has resulted in the atonement or at-one-ment of the justified sinner and God.

It was necessary also that He should be both God and man, that after having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, rising from the dead He could then give life to those believing on Him.

Christ did not die to regain the love of God, but His dying is the outflowing of that love to ruined man. Man's sin puts a barrier to that love, and God himself puts the barrier away by the sacrifice of His Son, and all that His righteous law may be honored. For He is not indifferent to sin. He must punish it, because He is infinitely righteous.

The full curse of the law fell on the sinner's substitute. The cross is thus the eternal witness of the righteousness of God, and in such a way as to also manifest His wondrous love to mankind.

So terrible is the evil of sin, and so inexorable is the justice of God! How great, then, is that love of God toward sinners, that gave His only begotten Son to die for them!

In like manner His holiness is also vindicated. His abhorrence of sin is manifested in the strongest expression of His displeasure. "He cast off and abhorred and was wroth with his anointed," when "He was made to be sin for us."

Satan's malevolent plan to thwart God's glorious work and ruin the race, instead, gave God the opportunity to display His love in the work of redemption, as He never could have done if man had remained innocent.

The Lord Jesus Christ suffered from God for sin. He suffered from man for righteousness. But it was by the will of God He came, predetermined to die a sin-offering for the guilty.

He bore the sin and also the penalty. The penalty for sin is separation from God. Thus He felt that separation from the Father which was the crowning agony of all His sufferings, and which, but for His sacrifice, every guilty sinner would have to feel to all eternity.

Atonement of sin by sacrifice was ordained of God from the beginning, implied in the first promise, and acknowledged in Abel's sacrifice. It is foreshadowed through the whole elaborate Jewish ceremonial service. Prophets proclaimed it. Jesus verified it, and it is continued in the "Lord's Supper." Lev. 17, "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." Rom. 3, "In his blood is propitiation." The Passover Lamb shows very expressively the saving power of Jesus' sacrifice. When God sees the blood (not when we see it) we are safe.

In Lev. 16, the High Priest takes the blood into the

presence of God and sprinkles it on the mercy-seat and seven times before it. Then their hands were laid on the scape-goat, and so the goat was sent away into the wilderness, bearing their sins away forever. It is God's estimate of the blood, not ours, that saves us.

The testimony of God is very plain. "He gave himself a ransom for all," I Tim. 2:6. ". . . suffered for sins, the just for the unjust," I Pet. 3:18. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. 9:26. Sin has been dealt with according to God's own mind, therefore it must be complete.

His own testimony is, "It is finished." Faith receives the word and enjoys perfect peace.

His suffering from God as the sin-offering far overshadows His suffering from man.

He was delivered into the hands of the powers of darkness. Luke 22:53.

The horror of Gethsemane was not so much the forsaking of the disciples as the knowledge of soon to be forsaken of the Father. It was this He had to endure as the "Lamb of God," taking away the sin of the world, unutterable agony being in the words, "If it be possible," but the willing Servant and obedient Son immediately added, "not my will but Thine be done."

That blessed countenance that He had rejoiced in from everlasting was hid from him, and sin, that odious thing, like a poisoned garment wrapped around Him, striking its venom into His very veins, and so He, the Holy One, endured that that otherwise would have been eternal hell to all the rebellious race of man.

“If it be possible,” — but of all things that was most impossible. Here is the extreme manifestation of His love, holding to its purpose in that fearful agony, known only to God and Himself.

The horrors of the judgment day will not show forth God’s righteousness and hatred of sin as this flaming forth of His wrath against the Son of His love on the cross.

Martyrs of Jesus have had His smile while dying, but He endured the frown of God.

Father, Son, and Spirit, lovingly united in this work of redemption ; man had no part in it.

Thus we have “peace through His blood,” and the veil being rent from top to bottom, we can draw nigh as purged worshipers.

The more implicit the faith, the more we honor the blood that has opened the way.

By the resurrection of Christ, God publicly attested His acceptance of His finished sacrificial work.”

So this is the gospel, that “God was in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself.”

The Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel are identical. To believe on Him is to be saved by the gospel.

THE FULL GOSPEL.

What has been stated is at least the rudiments of the gospel ; but to state the full gospel it is necessary to state not only what the Lord Jesus Christ has done in the past in the work of redemption, but also to state what He is now doing ; and what He is going to do in the future.

Much is said in the Epistles about coming to the "full knowledge" of Christ. That is, as to who He was, and is, and is to be. What He did, is doing, and will yet do. For to every Christian, redemption and salvation are related to the past, present, and future work of the Lord Jesus. As to the past, His sacrifice for sin upon the cross. As to the present, His position as High Priest interceding for us in the presence of God. As to the future, His coming again for His church, and as King of Israel.

There is much Scripture to show that as all things are created for the glory of God, so redemption and the salvation of sinners are also primarily for His glory.

The "fall" was permitted undoubtedly for the purpose of giving God the opportunity to glorify Himself in the plan of redemption.

For His attributes of perfection are all magnified, as well as his *love* set forth in such a way as could never be shown in his attitude toward the race merely of Creator and Ruler.

As soon as sin entered the world God was ready with His wondrous plan of redemption. Satan's work was thwarted, and the seeming hopeless disaster is turned to good account.

For the promised Savior is to become a new "Adam," who after becoming a sin-offering by His death, will by His resurrection become the new "Head" of such portion of the human race as shall be saved in and through Him. For it is written that "the first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving spirit."

The first Adam was a "son of God" only by creation; as the angels are said to be; *i. e.*, they are not "begotten." "God created man in His image," etc. But the Lord Jesus as the "last Adam" was Son of God, as the only begotten son of the Father, at the same time "son of man."

After bearing the penalty for our sins upon the cross, He was laid in the tomb, but after three days He was raised from the dead in a new life; it was not a restoration of the life He had before His death. "But God raised Him from the dead;" "as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." So that as "Head" of the "new creation" His resurrection day is accounted by God as His birthday. For He is also said to be "the firstborn from among the dead," "the firstborn among many brethren," etc. Showing that all who "believe into Him" are justified before God by their faith in Him; so receiving pardon and cleansing from their guilt, they also receive new life by being "born again" of the Spirit; even becoming partakers of the life of the Lord Jesus, *i. e.*, His resurrection life.

So it is seen that in the plan of redemption God saves sinners, "dead in trespasses and sins," to a new life in His Son; not the old life in the first Adam. Many mistakingly preach that this new life in Christ is a restoration of the old Adamic life lost in Eden, so that the outcome of salvation is merely the restoration of sinners to the innocence and bliss of Adam before he fell. Herein is a failure to see the true significance of Christ's resurrection.

It is not merely that Christ being raised from the dead, so *we* shall be. That is true ; but in rising from the dead He becomes the Head of the “new creation” consisting of the entire company of the saved, the church. It is fully set forth in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, represented as a “Body” with the Lord Jesus himself as the “Head.” In II Cor. 5 : 17 it is stated that “if any man be in Christ Jesus, there is a new creation, old things have passed away, new things have come into existence” (a better translation). The “old things,” as the context clearly shows, is the old standing in the first Adam, and the “new things” being the “new creation” in Christ.

Secondly, what is the Lord Jesus now doing, or what is his present work ?

As our ascended Lord He is fulfilling the office of our “High Priest,” as set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He is “appearing in the presence of God for us,” that is, He is hearing the prayers of, and interceding for the saints. He has sent the Holy Spirit to abide with the church till He comes again. The Holy Spirit is also interceding for the saints “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” So we have, as it were, a firm of lawyers pleading our case before God ; the Lord Jesus having his office in heaven, and the Holy Spirit having his office on the earth.

What else is the Lord Jesus doing now ? He is, for one thing, patiently waiting for the time to come ; the appointed hour ; when the present order of things is fulfilled, and He can take his church to Himself. The

church now is exhorted to enter into the patience of Christ; looking forward to and earnestly desiring that union with Him (II Thess. 3:5, margin). The present is especially the dispensation of the Holy Spirit; He is through the preaching of the Word, saving out from the world of both Jews and Gentiles a company called the church or "Body" of the Lord Jesus and destined to become the "Bride" of Christ at the consummation of this age.

It is written, "when Christ our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." So in speaking of what the Lord Jesus is yet to do, *i. e.*, the future of the great work of redemption; we simply say that He is to come again in like manner as He went into heaven at His ascension from the Mount of Olives. Raising the dead or "sleeping" saints, together with those living at that time, all are to be "caught up" to meet Him in the air; and so "to be ever with the Lord."

The church at the present time is represented as in the attitude of a chaste espoused virgin waiting for the appearing of her Lord; when at the "marriage of the Lamb" he is to become the "Bridegroom" and she the "Bride," to reign jointly forever in the kingdom of righteousness which he is to set up at His coming.

So it is seen that the company of the redeemed, the church, are saved to an exalted place far above that lost in the first Adam; even to the unspeakable glory of being "partakers of the divine nature" and made equal with the Lord Jesus himself. For although

Adam was "created in the image of God," yet he was not a partaker of the divine nature as every sinner is that is "born again" of the Holy Spirit.

The fact is that they are thus finally raised above all ranks of angels to be equal with the Lord Jesus, who was and is above all, "who was made for a little while lower than the angels for the suffering of death."

Coming down from the heights of glory and fellowship He had eternally enjoyed in the bosom of the Father, He comes to earth and takes on our human nature so that after having worked out their redemption He could take fallen, but now regenerated, sinners up with Him, past all ranks of angels, and seat them with Him on his throne! And all for the sake of the greater glory and exaltation of that beloved Son in the eyes of the unnumbered myriads of the vast universe of His creation; for it is written (Eph. 2:4-7) "But God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." This is the "gospel" or good news of God in Christ Jesus, and is it not wondrously good that lost sinners should be the recipients of such favor?

THE CORRUPTION.

In speaking of the corruption of the gospel it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the race again ; for from the very start, the record of false and true worshipers runs throughout the whole of human history.

As has been stated the Bible is a record of the person and work of the divine Redeemer, from the first promise given to Adam in Eden, till the last victory of the Lion of Judah in the Revelation. But along with that record goes also the record of the acts of the human race, or such portion of it as bears upon the Redeemer's person and work.

Throughout the six thousand years of the world's history, there has not been a generation wanting a company of genuine "believers," saved in and by the atoning sacrifice of this divine Redeemer. Also there has not been a generation wanting a company of spurious "professors," corrupters of the truth. Not referring to heathen idolaters, so-called, as the Greek and Roman ; or the mystical "religions" of the Chinese and Hindoos ; but those professing to worship the one true God, and to be followers of Jesus Christ. For throughout all the ages, Satan has produced his counterfeits of the true. It is the "way of Cain," as it is called in Jude's epistle ; and is the same at heart, though perhaps showing out a little differently in different generations. It is, practically, the denial of sin, and perdition, and the consequent need of a dying Redeemer. Let us look at it a little in detail.

When and just how the promised Redeemer was to appear was not told at first. Eve thought she had received the promised One in her first-born. But she was sadly mistaken, for he turned out a murderer ; thus showing that fallen man can only beget one in the likeness of himself, a sinner.

From this point there are two lines running along the human race for fifteen hundred years or more. They are the Cain and Seth descendants. The line of Seth is simply told in that each one begat a son, undoubtedly believing in and continuing the tradition of the coming Redeemer, and then "he died" is all that is recorded of him.

On the other hand Cain begets sons of whom it is said they were artificers and musicians ; but another murderer also is recorded right away, although they were "men of renown." From this it would seem that there was a considerable degree of civilization ; indeed many have thought that the arts and sciences reached quite an advanced stage in that antediluvian age.

But toward the close of the age we read that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth was corrupt before God, the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Gen. 6 : 5, 12.

The great majority were unbelievers, filling the earth with violence and cruelty, and growing worse and

worse ; till God could not endure their wickedness longer and so swept the whole race from the face of the earth, saving only one family, to repeople the earth. Now what is the generation of all this evil thus far ?

In the statement that God clothed Adam and Eve with skins shows that beasts were slain, undoubtedly in sacrifice, God thus teaching them the sacrificial nature of the coming Redeemer. Abel as a genuine "believer" slays a lamb and offers it as a burnt sacrifice upon an altar ; thus admitting that he believed himself a sinner worthy of death, and that God would accept the substitutionary death of another, by his own (that is, God's) appointment. Cain, quite the contrary, does not admit himself to be a sinner worthy of death ; but quite worthy to come into God's presence as a worshiper in his own right of personal rectitude. His "sacrifice," if it may be so called, is really a present to Jehovah of the "fruit of the ground" brought, as it were, as a proof of the goodness of his heart, in that he is willing to worship God at all ! In some way God manifested an acceptance of Abel's sacrifice and himself, but a non-acceptance of Cain or his "sacrifice." This angered Cain and he slew his brother. Why he should reason that Abel had anything to do with his non-acceptance with God it is hard to see ; but, of course, quite naturally he was not going to admit that the trouble was with himself. So the false worshiper of the true God persecutes the true worshiper. It has ever been so, and they have been more bitter persecutors than the heathen idolaters have.

This antediluvian age is called the dispensation without law.

The descendants of Noah repeople the earth rapidly. But it is not long before corruption comes to such a head in the matter of the building of the tower of Babel, that God intervenes with the miracle of multiplication of languages, thus scattering the people abroad and founding the different nations, very much as they have come down to the present day.

God at this time takes one man again (Abraham) and makes his descendants rapidly increase into a nation, and calls them "his people," "a chosen nation," etc.

Throughout the history of the nation of Israel the fallen nature of man is again tested under different circumstances from that previously.

They are not the whole human race, but yet as a sample, they show what is in the heart of man, and what the race would do if put in the same circumstances.

The circumstances that Israel came up under were especially favorable, one would think. They had a miraculous deliverance from their bondage in Egypt, and as has been said, they had God-appointed leaders, a God-given law, and tabernacle services, and above all, the manifest presence of God in that tabernacle. They made protestations of perpetual allegiance to Jehovah, mutual covenants were entered into; with what result? A record of constant failure. One long-continued history of "backsliding" into shameful idolatry; then chastened of God and brought back, only to fall away again after a little, and so on till their history closes with

their final and worst crime of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah.

Their violent treatment of the Lord Jesus himself had proved true his own words that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," and that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately (*i. e.*, hopelessly) wicked."

In the words of another: "The doctrine of the reprobate character and irretrievable ruin of the 'flesh' is as firmly established as the doctrine of salvation. The fact that in us 'dwelleth no good' does not remain now to be tried, but is to be accepted as finally proved. It was proved at the cross of Christ, when the curtain fell on the delusive hope that there was good in man. The deliberate choice, 'not this man but Barabbas,' settled the character of our fallen nature."

The Jews were the professed worshipers of the true God, yet they did not know God. Claiming to be scrupulous students of the Scriptures, yet they did not recognize the Messiah when he came. They were worshiping the true God, to be sure, but not worshiping "in spirit and in truth," for they were destitute of both. They were following "in the way of Cain" and ended as Cain did, by hating and then murdering the true Worshiper. They did not ignore, but perverted the truth, hence were a "perverse generation," or nation. It is recorded of Peter's first address after Pentecost, that "he exhorted with many like words saying, save yourselves from this perverse generation."

The Lord Jesus had said to them, "in vain do they

worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. . . . Ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

A historian says: "One of the most prominent corrupting influences was the undue authority assigned in the interpretation of the Scripture to the verdict of oral tradition. . . . In this collection (the Talmud) a greater respect appears for the letter than the spirit of the Bible, and to be learned in its traditional interpretation began to be reckoned of greater account than to walk in the ways of the fathers."

The things that happened to Israel are said to be "for our example upon whom the ends of the world (age) are come."

Indeed the whole course of Israel's ways and happenings, and God's dealings with them, is an object lesson of great importance to us.

Israel, as a nation, was a company of unregenerate people. There were exceptions, of course. A small number in every generation, undoubtedly, who were truly regenerated by the Spirit and so true worshipers. The seven thousand at the time of Elijah were a sample of what might be found at all times probably, even in the times of greatest declension. There were always a few men like Abraham and Moses, David and Daniel, and others who were "men of God" and faith. But that does not alter the fact that, as a whole, it was a nation of unregenerate people. This is of great importance in considering the lesson of God's dealings with them.

As has been said, their history is one of continuous

failure and apostacy, restrained only by fear. Yet God continued with his merciful dealings. Sent them prophets and leaders time and again. Pleading with them in greatest tenderness. Yet there was no heart response in unfeeling Israel.

After centuries of this testing and proving the inability of fallen human nature to serve God by keeping the law, and worshiping and obeying Him from the heart, we come down to Christ's time and hear Him saying to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto you ye must be born again." The "must be" was made evident by this long time of testing the human race under the most favorable religious circumstances. Yet it was proved beyond question that the "natural man" could not be educated into goodness, or developed into an upright moral being. There must be a "new creation," and a complete repudiation of the old. There are many now who "marvel" when hearing the necessity of the "new birth" preached, and the world is full of teachers claiming that human nature is not fallen, and is capable of all good if only put in sufficiently favorable "environments." This is the false gospel of Satan, with which he deceives men and women willing to be deceived, and by which like a false swamp-light, he leads them on to everlasting perdition.

So ends another chapter in the history of the testing of the race; it had under these favorable circumstances been tried and failed; been "weighed in the balances and found wanting." Not that God needed to have it proved to Him what the outcome would be. But that

it needed to be uncontrovertibly proved to mankind of future generations, and, also, undoubtedly, to the onlooking hosts of heaven, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin."

Israel, as a nation, is cut off now from the "olive" root of dispensational privilege, and we see them, as a nation, bearing their punishment to the present day.

God now turns to the Gentile nations in grace, sending forth the gospel of His Son. How has human nature shown up under the greater blessings of this Gentile dispensation? Has not the history of Christendom from the time of Christ been one of corrupting of the truth, accompanied by religious intolerance and even bloodshed by professed followers of Christ? Scoffing and indifference to the claims of God by the cultured masses at best; while greed, oppression, dishonesty, and lust continually cropping out, show what is underneath even the best society! And among the lower classes, whether in Christendom or Heathendom, vice, gross lust, and cruelty, as the daily life, filling up the dark picture.

The oppressed condition of the mill hands and miners, and also the army of unemployed in our land, is very evident to any one at all awake to the condition of this country and the world at the present time.

No wonder there is the ever-increasing struggle of these masses for freedom from these ills. But to the humble student and believer in God's Word, it is also pitiable to see the futile efforts of this poor fallen race to reform itself. It is not God's order to reform the world, it is hastening to judgment.

The reform leaders ("socialists," etc.) seem to leave out of account the fact of sin being the fundamental evil. They speak of "selfishness" to be sure, but as if existing in the oppressing capitalists only. Whereas the oppressed and oppressors are alike sinners before God, and are equally under His just condemnation. It is certain that the same heart of evil exists in both, so that if the tables could be turned, the poor becoming the employers and the rich becoming in turn the employed, there would be enacted over again just the same greed and oppression that we now see.

There is the ever-recurring boast of this (U. S.) being the best form of government in the world. As they say, "A government of the people, by the people, and for the people." But a republic or democracy cannot succeed as a human government because of man's fallen sinful nature. He cannot govern himself, how can he govern others! Under these circumstances there must necessarily be more or less self-seeking, "wire-pulling," etc., to gain self-interest in some form or other. In a word, among self-seeking rulers there cannot be a working out of the first principles of good government, viz., "the greatest good to all."

Where shall we turn for a solution? Where but to the source of all truth, God's Word? God in starting with the chosen nation of Israel, evidently intended to show as an object lesson to all the world, the highest form of government, viz., a monarchy, with God Himself the Supreme Ruler, really a theocracy (God-government). But they soon threw off the yoke, and

the theocracy ceased. So God is now letting the nations try self-government in different forms.

In the experiment sometimes it gets very oppressive, and then some reformer arises, or new party is formed, that accomplishes a little reform, and great hopes are set by the new order of things that now the trouble will be permanently healed. But alas! shortly the "reform" needs reforming, and the remedy seems as far off as ever.

The fact is, God is letting "man" try his way, and do "his level best" (this being "man's judgment day"), and when it is fully proved before the world and angels how fallen and how helplessly impotent man is to save or reform himself, God will step into the scene and inaugurate a new order of things. First He has declared that he will judge the world by that man whom He has appointed, viz., the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will thus be manifested as the righteous King and Judge. Setting up a righteous kingdom wherein there will be no oppression; but peace and happiness be the rule instead of distress and disorder. Where justice will exist in fact rather than pretense, *i. e.*, where all are made to do right as well as get their rights.

Yet there are those who claim the world is growing better! It surely is better off, with the greater "light" of the present over the past ages, and the greater conveniences of an advanced civilization.

But this only enables men to cover up their wickedness better. The propriety of the present culture will

not allow men to sin so openly as formerly, thus hypocrisy is practised as never before.

Men naturally deny that they are sinners, "lost" or "fallen" to the degree the Scriptures state. Quite naturally then their religiousness consists in proving their supposed "inherent goodness."

Most cultured, refined people wish themselves to be considered "Christian people." So multitudes, through a half-way confession of Christ, before some "examining committee" who have very low ideas of what a Christian really is, are admitted to the membership of the so-called "evangelical churches," and henceforth pass under the name of Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian, etc., while still really unregenerate, and, of course, know not Christ.

If it is meant by the world growing better that the refined and cultured classes are growing more philanthropic and "religious," why, perhaps, yes. But the religiousness of fallen human nature is as bad in God's sight as any of its evil acts. In fact it is the most God-dishonoring of all. It denies his Word.

"Total depravity" is not a Scriptural phrase, but it is a Scriptural and historical fact. Sin is just the same incurable and desperate evil now in every human being that it was in Adam, David, or Paul. The Scriptures declare "there is no difference." But for restraining circumstances the evil of every and any human heart would break out into as great wickedness as ever was perpetrated by man. Many rebel at this doctrine and say "it is too leveling."

It is not the doctrine but the fact that is leveling. All are in like condition before God. Well might an unsaved sinner, who thus sees himself indeed a sinner, cry out with the jailor at Phillippi, "What must I do to be saved?" or with one, thousands of years ago, "How shall man be just (justified) with God?"

In considering this present age of Gentile ingrafting there is much that is parallel with the history of Israel. For as Israel was a chosen nation separated from the other nations with the evident intention of God that they should keep separated, so the church is a company of saved sinners separated from the world, and with the evident intention of God that they should keep separated. But in neither case has the intention been carried out.

In the twenty-second chapter of Deuteronomy, God is teaching Israel His abhorrence of mixture in the laws there given concerning the not sowing of divers seeds, and not wearing garments of divers materials, etc.

In the twelfth chapter of Exodus, we read that "a mixed multitude came out of Egypt with Israel," and later on we find that the mixed multitude led Israel to sin. Still later, upon their entering the land of Canaan, God commanded an utter extermination of the idolatrous tribes, fully warning Israel of the evil and harm sure to come to them if they allowed any of these tribes to remain. But Israel did not obey God in this matter, and many of these idolatrous people were allowed to remain and mingle with Israel as servants. But they led Israel into idolatry as foretold by God. So the

church of Christ, instead of being a company of saved sinners, separated from the world, is become a great body of a "mixed multitude" consisting of the three great branches of Greek, Romish, and Protestant systems. And as it was the "mixed multitudes" that caused Israel to fall a-lusting, and to corrupt the true worship of Jehovah, so has the unregenerate mixture in the churches been foremost in causing the many forms of ecclesiastical impurity and practice which at present exist.

God's plans and institutions do not need changing and adjusting, or new and rearrangements to adapt to changing times and customs, as men's plans do. God, the Holy Spirit who instituted and constituted the church at the beginning, was able in His omniscience to see down through all the coming age to its end. And thus knowing what the church would pass through and its future needs, organized and constituted it as He saw would be required to meet all exigencies of the future.

God is His own architect and builder, and the house when done is His. He does not need, nor can man help Him of himself. He graciously uses men in His work, but the plan and order of development and means are of His ordering from first to last.

The writer is no "fatalist," although there is to the indiscriminating mind a similarity between "fatalism" and the Scripture teaching of God's plan of the ages, in foreordaining and election. Everything is not "cut and dried," however, else there would not be the scores

of exhortation for Christians to exercise their "free will" in doing or not doing as the case may be.

But it is just this ; if all the wisest men of the church, men of the astutest minds, men of heaviest "mental calibre," men venerable in experience, yes, the very strongest representation of the world-wide Christendom should, in international council convened, decide that certain measures (of their own devising) were beneficial for the church ; would that, let the humble student of God's Word be asked, would that have a feather weight of value in the opinion of God.

Unfortunately for the church there have been in every age leaders arise who have sought to popularize the church. They have reasoned that they must "keep in touch with the age," and have felt it necessary to apply the advanced ways and means of modern civilization to Christianity.

It is plainly Satan's work, preparing the way for his anti-christ. Roman Catholicism is but one branch of the evil ; it pervades Protestantism also. Through sectarianism he causes divisions and separations of Christians, thus causing weakness in the general body. Through "public worship" he gets the popularizing of the church, which is far more detrimental than sectarianism. And why all this evil ? Because of departing from the Word of God, and following traditions instead !

Christian teachers have for centuries followed one another instead of continually referring back to the Word of God. In reading the sermons and writings of the preachers of the past generation, as for instance

Baxter, Brainard, Edwards, Wesley, etc., we see how far they were from teaching the Word purely. They seem rather to have followed the traditions and adaptations of those before them. This was taught to theological students, to again teach in turn, and these "traditions" are thus handed down to the present day.

Customs so venerable are held onto with much prejudice, and only with the greatest difficulty can anyone be got to honestly and earnestly question, Are we right? Are we acting and teaching according to God's Word?

But the present generation study the Bible far more than the past generation; and there is now said to be much knowledge of the Word as compared with the past.

There is, undoubtedly, more "familiarity with the Scriptures," but that is not the same thing as knowledge through having "spiritual discernment." With all the Sunday-school teaching of the present day, still Christians are untaught concerning Jesus Christ, *i. e.*, as to His person and work; they know nothing comparatively as to the simple facts concerning the plan of redemption and the kingdom of Christ. The Scriptures are studied as isolated passages largely, without getting the truth of the general whole first, at least in some degree. This is probably the chief cause of the bulk of the errors and mistakes that are so generally held.

The Bible is not a collection of separate books, but is one book in sixty-six parts. It has one author and one theme, *viz.*, "Redemption by Jesus Christ in order to

the establishment of the kingdom of God in the world." In the development of the work of redemption through the ages of the world's history, God has worked through different means and channels at different times. These consecutive ages are called "dispensations," and it is important to clearly see dispensational truth, or the study of the Word will be confusing and will lead to error.

Throughout the several Old Testament dispensations God is preparing the world for the coming of the Redeemer. In "due time," *i. e.*, the appointed prophetic time, He came, and was made a sacrifice for sin by His death; then He rose from the dead, and after promising to send the Holy Spirit, ascended to heaven. He also stated plainly, but indefinitely as to time, that He would come again.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did come according to promise, upon the little company of believers, and thus was the church instituted and organized.

In a few years, before their death, several of the apostles wrote letters to certain churches, which soon came to be recognized as "inspired," and so with the gospels and Revelation were reckoned in with the Old Testament books, the whole from that time being regarded as the Scriptures or Word of God. There is a difference between the teaching of the "gospels" and the epistles.

Christ came to Israel as their Messiah and His words and acts directed to them are as one "under the law" to those under the law, and so are not applicable or in-

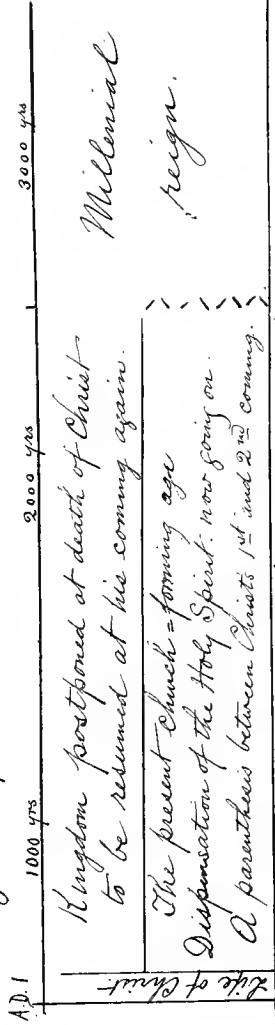
tended for the church which is not under the law but under grace.

The Lord Jesus had now, so to speak, turned the care of the church upon the earth over to the Holy Spirit. So the present age may be spoken of as preëminently the dispensation of the Holy Spirit; and He has inspired the epistles for the express purpose of guiding the church till the Lord comes again.

It is very noticeable that so little, practically nothing, of all the Lord Jesus's teachings are referred to in the epistles. This certainly can hardly be accidental or unmeaning.

Now the Protestant church holds that the work of the church is primarily the conversion of the unsaved. The maintenance of "public worship" is supposed to be for this end. The Sunday-school has the same object. Even the prayer-meetings of the church are now called "gospel meetings," and are conducted mainly with reference to persuading persons to "accept Christ," and become Christians. Outside the church, the so-called Christian organizations claim to have the same object, as the Y. M. C. A., Salvation Army, etc.

Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



AD. 33 The Acts and the Epistles relate to this age

But reading closely the epistles with reference to seeing what the principal commands are, it will be found that laboring for the conversion of the unsaved is not the first and foremost command. The most oft-repeated command is "love the brethren," repeated many times. So that in all the many commands found in the epistles there is really nothing like a command for individual Christians to labor for the salvation of the unregenerate; but rather to labor for the salvation of saints.

Failing to see this, and that the great object of redemption of mankind is the glory of God primarily, and not the need of the sinner to be saved, and so supposing that the saving of sinners and by whatever means, is the thing of first importance, has led to a multitude of expediences in the church utterly at variance with the teachings and commands of the Word of God.

We read in Rev. 4, 11, that all things were created by, and for the pleasure of, God; the inference is that the redemption of mankind is also. In Col. 1 we read also that all things were created by the Son, and by Him all things consist, or hold together. It is unto the kingdom of "His dear Son" that all things concerning redemption culminate. In Acts 15, we read that the purpose of God in this dispensation is to take out from the Gentiles "a people for his name." Not to "convert the world" but saving a number from each generation, all together at last forming the "Bride" that is to be presented to "His dear Son." This is the "election of grace."

The doctrine of "election" was so unscripturally held by the first generation that perhaps that as much as anything is the reason for its being so entirely ignored at present. They failed to see the mercy of God in it: claiming that it is partial and unjust. But the doctrine of election stands or falls in a Christian's mind according to whether he holds the doctrine of sonship and regeneration scripturally. But there is great misapprehension concerning sonship and regeneration, and so as a natural consequence "election" is utterly misapprehended; for they are bound up together, and so to be rightly understood should be seen together.

This blessed doctrine of God's love to lost sinners in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot be discerned by carnal Christians or the unregenerate; to them it seems preposterous; the "spiritual" having spiritual discernment alone can understand and receive it. Just as the carnal Christian cannot understand the difference between "flesh and spirit" in John 3 (the new birth), or dispensational truth, or the scriptural meaning of "heaven," or the antichristian apostacy of the present condition of Christendom, and the like truths. The usual exclamation is, when the doctrine of election is mentioned: "Why! do you mean to say that a man cannot be saved even if he wants to, if he is not one of the elect?" It is quite natural that they should question thus, seeing they are ignorant of the teaching of Scripture as to the morally helpless condition of fallen human nature. Otherwise they would know that no unregenerate man wants to be saved, in the true sense. They

may say that they want to go to heaven, or escape hell ; but they do n't want to become holy ; sin does not want to give up sin.

Again they will say : But does n't it distinctly say " Whosoever will may come," etc. ? Here, also, they show their lack of spiritual discernment in not seeing that this is not an invitation to the unregenerate to accept salvation. And it is noticeable that there are no invitations in Scripture to the unregenerate to accept salvation. I know some will say : How about all those invitations in the Old Testament, like " Come now let us reason together," in Isaiah, and " Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die," " Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," and others. In all these God is beseeching backsliding Israel, as a nation, to forsake idolatry and return to their allegiance to Him. These passages should not be used out of their setting, for they are not invitations to the unregenerate to accept salvation. That passage, also, in Proverbs, as generally used, " He that winneth souls is wise," is very misleading, supposing, as they do by this, that persons can be won to Christ through personal pleading and laboring.

The meaning of the passage evidently is that he that wins friends to himself is wise. Well, some will say, There is the passage in II Cor. " We then as ambassadors of God, beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." But it is to be noticed that this is a letter of an apostle to a little flock of Christians, the exhortation is, therefore, addressed to Christians.

As to the passage in Revelation, " whosoever will,"

etc., the invitation is evidently addressed to a company of saved persons in that future age when the church has become the "Bride;" the church now is the chaste virgin espoused to Christ, waiting for the marriage day.

Then it may be said, Is it not said several times that "whosoever believeth hath everlasting life?" Certainly, but this is only a statement of an existing fact, not a contingent declaration or invitation. Mind; it does not say whosoever will believe. The fact is, the willing in the case is by another, even God Himself. In a word, the desperate, helpless, hopeless condition of fallen human nature is not recognized by the preachers of the present day, no, not even the evangelists, great or small, for they all work and preach on the principle that sinners can be persuaded to accept of salvation, *i. e.*, that the willing lies with them. This is not like the preaching of the apostles, for they never preached the gospel in the shape of an invitation. They declared the gospel, *i. e.*, the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit accompanied this declaration as the means of regeneration. They never urged sinners to believe, accept, receive, etc.

In John 5:25, 26, the dead (in trespasses and sins) hear the voice of the Son of God and live. The statement that "the hour now is" shows that this verse refers to sinners now hearing and living, in distinction from the 28th verse, which plainly says that the hour is coming when those in the tombs shall hear, etc., referring evidently to the resurrection. The 21st verse

declares that the Son gives life to whom He will, *i. e.*, speaks sinners into life, spiritually, just as He physically spoke Lazarus into life, lying helpless in the tomb. So throughout the New Testament eternal life is always shown to be the gift of God. Rom. 6:23, etc.

The Scripture really teaches that some are “previously marked out” (Roth. trans. instead of “predestined”) and gratuitously given forgiveness of sins and eternal life in the Son. Why He thus chooses some instead of all, or certain ones instead of others He does not choose to tell us. But it is not an “unkind partiality,” for if He did not choose some, none would be saved. For He is not under obligation to any to save them, and we must remember we are not saved for our own sakes, but for His glory. It stands Christians in hand to be very glad and humbly grateful that God has thus shown His great love toward them. For they must all admit Christ’s statement, “Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you.”

By way of parenthesis let it be here stated that in all this writing the object is to show that Gentile Christendom has not remained in the “goodness of God,” *i. e.*, the present dispensational privilege, any more than Israel did in the past, and for which they were “cut off” from the “olive root.” And that Christendom for the same reason is to be cut off. And that the foundation evil is a departure from the Word of God, in Christian doctrine and ecclesiastical practices. And that the Greek, Romish, and Protestant divisions of said Christendom are alike guilty of this gross departure.

Not that the writer would set himself up as a judge of his Christian brethren, or as a "reformer" of the church. For we are not expected to reform evils, but to separate from them. Nevertheless it is our duty to discern the times and to be awake to the devices and work of the adversary, and not lend our aid by fellowship with it, but give a warning cry as loud and clear as we are able.

In order to still clearer see the truth of the statement that we have grossly departed from the Word of God, let us look a little more closely at some of the

ERRORS AND MISAPPREHENSIONS

concerning even the fundamental doctrines of salvation. How many have mistaken ideas concerning "being a Christian," as it is called, or more correctly stated, how they came to be and what they are as Christians; what the church is, its relation, position, and testimony in the world, and its final destiny.

This is brought out quite strongly by asking different persons, "Are you a Christian?"

Various will be the answers, and they are quite significant. Some will answer with a supposed becoming diffidence, "I hope so." Others will answer in a sort of business-like way, "Certainly, I'm a member of such and such a church." Still others again will say evasively, "Well—er—perhaps not just what you might call a Christian, but I'm not as bad," etc.

These answers tell a good deal more than the simple words uttered.

Take the first, "I hope so." It is generally uttered by persons who are probably true believers, but who are uninstructed as to the fact that the Word gives the assurance to believers to know that their sins are forgiven, and that they are now "Sons of God" through the new birth. They are not taught that the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross is a finished work, leaving nothing for sinners to do but to add to its merits, and that believing in Him they have forgiveness of sins and new life.

But somehow they feel that this believing alone does not constitute them Christians; they reason that when besides thus believing, they show a consistently proper life, then they can consistently say they are Christians. They fail to see that the manner of life has nothing to do with constituting them Christians. It is entirely a matter of being not doing. Just as manner of life has nothing to do with a man's being an Englishman or a German. So with the Christian, it's a matter of birth, the new birth of the Holy Spirit. A life obedient to the principles and commands of the Word is required, to be sure, but it does not in the least help to constitute them Christians, or add to their acceptance or justification before God. Much might be said right here, and emphatically, concerning the untaught condition of Christians generally, in spite, too, of all the boasted study of the Word.

Then those who answer, "I'm a member of such and such a church." It is to be feared that most of those giving such an answer know nothing of the sav-

ing grace of God in Christ Jesus, but are deceived into thinking they are Christians when they are not. They have never really seen themselves as sinners, and God's judicial satisfaction for sin in the death of His Son. They have sometime, probably, been moved by the recital of some "touching" incident, and they reason that they must have a pretty good heart to be thus touched; good enough at least to be called a Christian, and so fit to "join the church." They don't like to be pressed too closely with such questions as, "Are you a Christian? Do you know your sins are forgiven? Are you sure of life in Christ Jesus?" It is enough for them they think to be "in good and regular standing" of some church.

This class usually live fairly moral lives, and "attend church" quite regularly, for they depend upon this for their standing before God instead of regeneration through Jesus Christ.

Thus Satan deceives men, and enables them to successfully, as they think, compromise the matter and not have to humble their pride by confessing themselves sinners.

Then those giving a decidedly evasive answer. They hesitate, and don't want to say yes or no, seemingly, and why? The fact is that in highly respectable society it is quite necessary to "be a Christian" (at least nominally), to be "received." In a word, we have come to such a pass that it is no longer a reproach, but on the contrary an "accomplishment" deemed necessary to round out one's social character.

Many realizing this, wish to be thought Christians. They try to persuade themselves that they are not very bad, not bad enough to be styled "sinners," but probably good enough to be styled "Christians," of course utterly mistaking what a true Christian really is.

The cause of this state of things is not hard to find. The mode of preaching, and what is called the "gospel" given at the present time by most evangelists, is certain to bring about just such results. Sin is not taken account of, its sinfulness shown, its consequences stated, nor on the other hand is Christ set forth as God's judicial satisfaction for sin; nor the repentant believing sinners perfect acceptance by God in Christ. But instead young men and women are urged to "take a stand for Christ," to "give their heart to God," to "take the first step in the Christian life," etc.

The writer has heard a preacher of some note addressing a crowded church full of young people (the meeting was styled a gospel address to the young), urge upon them this reason among others why they should become Christians, viz., "because it is fashionable." Is it any wonder the results are just what they are?

And what shall be said of the unscriptural practice of "singing the gospel" that has become so popular of late years? Of course it is based on the supposition that men and women must be "moved" to become Christians by some exercise of their own. So floods of "gospel hymns" have come into existence. Many are hymns of "invitation," and many are pathetic hymns

to "touch the sensibilities." All of which "moving" and emotional work is worse than useless, for it is more likely than not to make deceptive "conversions" merely.

It can be classed among the "carnal weapons" along with sensational preaching, etc.

In fact how many of the hymns of all kinds used by the church are misleading and deceptive in their teaching through being partial, or even actually incorrect, statements of truth.

There is much preached that is called the "gospel" that is not the gospel. And there are all degrees of divergence from the true gospel. But one thing is common to them all. The "lost" condition of fallen humanity is not recognized to the full degree as set forth in the Scriptures. No broken law, no offended justice, therefore no punishment due.

Sinners are spoken of as having a "better nature" that can be appealed to, and so they are urged to "assert their manhood," etc. This being the case, they consistently teach that all that is necessary is to introduce him into new and good "environments" and he will, if not all at once, gradually learn to do right! And that means "salvation" to many so-called Christian teachers at the present time.

Men and women are recognized as being in distress of different kinds. Oppression of man against man is seen, but no recognition of offence against the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. "Salvation" with them means only relief from the present trouble, distress, or

poverty. If the oppression of man to man could cease, they seem to think this world would be a heaven!

But besides those who preach such an utterly false "gospel" it is safe to say that even most of those who preach the true gospel yet preach it very superficially. With most of them also salvation from trouble, and a life of degradation, not condemnation before God and eternal punishment, seem to be the main idea. They are running more and more into the "rescue mission" style of preaching, if it may be called preaching, the gospel. People are not under condemnation, but "poor dears" in suffering and need help.

Of course there is much suffering in the world, and it needs relieving as much as possible; but it should be recognized as all the result of sin. God is curing the great evil of sin through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, and so the consequent suffering in this world will eventually disappear, *i. e.*, after judgment, in His righteous kingdom.

Many evangelists make no statement of sin whatever. When asked why they do not they answer, "Oh, everyone knows he is a sinner, it's a waste of time telling him of it." It should rather be recognized that men do not know that they are sinners. The "natural man" does not perceive or willingly receive it. As some one has truly said, "No one sees himself as a sinner in the Scriptural sense, only as he is shown it by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word."

Preachers do not state the depth to which man is fallen on the one side, nor the height to which he is

raised in Christ Jesus on the other. There is a slackness in studying the Word on the subject. There is too much reading what other men say about it, rather than a close attention to what God the Spirit has written concerning it. The electric haste of the times doesn't allow of a slow and patient attention in the matter. Much, also, is taken for granted where nothing should be.

A superficial recognition of the lost estate of man is invariably accompanied by a correspondingly superficial recognition of redemption and salvation. As sin is belittled, so the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is belittled.

Meanwhile, the lie of Satan that men are not sinners to the degree that the Word of God declares them to be, is like a "leaven" permeating almost all teaching and preaching of the present time. It is met with in sermons, in Sunday-school lesson notes, in so-called "Christian fiction," etc., etc. For Satan uses every agency he can, and every one he can blind sufficiently, yet making all "appear as ministers of righteousness." Christ is held up as "Teacher" and "Friend," yes and even as "Saviour," saving from sin; but it is not as taught in either case in the Word.

The statement that we are not sinners and do not need a dying Saviour, as put forth by the Unitarians, is found to be too blank and bold by the adversary. He finds that he must be more subtle; so he enters the "Evangelical" pulpit and press, and admits both truths, but only in a partial degree. But it is far more

deceptive and just as destructive. He finds that the truth is harmless if administered with a little leaven of falsity. For the truth does not act like leaven, while false doctrine does. Thus are the leaders and teachers of Christendom repeating Israel's sin, in following "traditions of men" rather than the Word of God, and on account of which the judgment of "cutting off" of Gentile "Christendom" will surely come.

As there is a misapprehension of what the gospel really is, so there is a misapprehension of the Scripture methods of presenting it. The gospel, as has been shown, is the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work; therefore, the presentation of the gospel is the presentation of Him.

We have for examples the addresses, recorded in the first chapters of Acts, by Peter, Paul, and John, delivered at Pentecost and shortly after.

In Peter's first address, upon the presentation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit uses the Word like a "sharp two-edged sword" and pierces the deadened consciences, causing them to cry out "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then it was said to them "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

There was no presentation of the gospel as an invitation, as at present is so generally done. There is no precedent or warrant for it in the Word.

The invitations in the Old Testament, as has been said, are not invitations to individual salvation, but to Israel as a nation to forsake their idolatry and renew their allegiance to Jehovah according to the provisional

covenant they had agreed to. These invitations, therefore, are not applicable in preaching the gospel.

The invitations in the New Testament are likewise misunderstood and misapplied. That very familiar one, "Come unto Me all ye that labor," etc., is not an invitation to salvation, but for restful service.

The Scriptures plainly teach that faith cometh by hearing the gospel preached; but it as plainly states that faith "is the gift of God" as well as eternal life. The fact is, "dead" sinners are freely given life by the Holy Spirit through the agency of the preached Word.

Lazarus lying dead in the tomb was not offered life, if he would come forth and accept it. No. He could not. He was graciously spoken into life. So is the mercy of God exhibited toward dead sinners.

Another misapprehension is supposing that the Scriptures represent sin as a disease like leprosy, palsy, or blindness, and so sinners are urged to "come to Jesus and be healed." That is a theory only, out of some one's brain, but there is no warrant for it in the Word.

Again, there is misapprehension as to who is to preach the gospel.

Immediately after the stoning of Stephen, the disciples were scattered abroad, and all seemingly preached the Word.

But this seems to be a part of the special effect of that recent outpouring of the Spirit on the newly-organized church, along with having "all things common," and both of which are probably samples of conditions yet

to be realized under a greater Pentecost yet to come. It would seem that they were not expected to continue.

We do not find the Apostles in any of their writings urging upon all Christians the necessity of their preaching the gospel or laboring for the salvation of the unsaved. There are a great number of commands but this is not one of them.

There seems to be a different order of teachings in the gospels from that in the epistles. In fact the disciples themselves seem to be on a different standing before and after Pentecost. During the life of the Lord Jesus they are addressed by Him evidently as Jewish believers, and are probably related to that Jewish "restoration" that is hinted at as yet to come, as, for instance, their sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, etc. But after Pentecost they appear as simply Christian apostles, and the Holy Spirit's teaching through them in the epistles is of an evidently different order. So we find no command throughout the Acts or epistles equivalent to Christ's command to the "eleven," "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Of all the commands of the Lord Jesus, the only one that is repeated by the Holy Spirit in the epistles is what He calls His "new commandment," viz., that they "love one another," and this is repeated or implied upward of forty times in the epistles.

Taking the consensus of all the commands in the epistles, the main idea plainly is that Christians are to labor for the salvation of other Christians.

Not that they are "lost" as the unsaved are; but when one believes on the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of his sins and acceptance with God, salvation is only begun. Salvation is, or should be, a continuous thing. Indeed, the Scriptures speak of salvation as a future thing. Christians, therefore, need "saving" in many ways in this life. This is the "ministry to the saints" so earnestly urged upon Christians throughout the epistles.

Not only has there been thus a departure from the teaching of the Word in regard to doctrine and mode of preaching the gospel, but also in regard to

CONDUCT OF THE CHURCHES.

As has been said the Acts and the epistles are pre-eminently the guide of the church throughout this dispensation of the Holy Spirit. In them we find how the church was instituted, and what the evident intent of God was in the conduct of the church through the whole coming age.

There is not the slightest hint that there would ever be any need for, nor is there any authority given for adapting to various times and customs. Not a thought of "keeping in touch with the age," but that the church should keep separate from the world, both as to its individual beliefs and also in its corporate capacity as assemblies. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," without a hint that they were to invite the world to "worship" with them. "Public worship" has completely subverted this law of separation. This

public worship of a "mixed multitude" has no little to do with causing the mixed multitude of regenerate and unregenerate that confessedly exist in the churches at present, under the name of "church members."

As a natural and necessary result of "public worship," there follows a string of concomitants, as a public house of worship, a scholarly ministry, beautiful decorations, delightful music, etc., requiring mints of money to be raised, and even the world is asked to give toward paying for them!

Contrary to this the evident intent of the Spirit was that the church should always meet by themselves, yet welcoming any of the unsaved who might incidentally come in. It seems to have been expected that it should always be "a little flock" in the midst of the world's multitudes. Despised rather than popular. A suffering church. Yet a standing miracle, as it were, in showing forth a supernatural union, and an intense love or care for one another, thus showing forth its allegiance to God in its obedience to His Word, rather than ingenuity in making ecclesiastical inventions.

But it has repeated Israel's sin in these matters also, with disastrous results.

The "blindness" that happened to Israel is also manifest now throughout Christendom, till it can be said of the present leaders and teachers also, that they, too, are "blind leaders of the blind." There is little if any accurate knowledge of the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ is not plainly set forth. Sermons are upon almost every topic but Him.

The Sunday-school also is an unwarranted invention of man. There is the supposition that it is a means of conversion, and indeed that is the avowed object of its existence. It has given, it is admitted, a considerable familiarity with the text of Scripture. But when that is obtained without spiritual discernment, as for instance with the unregenerate, it is worse than nothing for the individual.

Christians should be happy in the Lord. But are they? Those that know not their free acceptance and blessing in Christ cannot be. No one can rejoice in blessings that they are not conscious of possessing.

Other Christians though possibly happy at heart, do not exhibit it. They have care-worn, anxious faces through an excessive desire for hair-splitting correctness in ecclesiastical practices to the exclusion of love. This is the other extreme of a few, whereas the great majority represent the opposite extreme. It is evidently the Adversary's work to spoil thus the testimony of Christians' lives. We must follow closely the Word in its teaching in all things in order to have a wholesome, honest, lively testimony before the world. Not in the energy of the "flesh," but in the power of resurrection life in Christ, so that it will be true of us also, that it is "the love of Christ constraining us." "Not I but Christ that liveth in me," as Paul testifies.

Another thing is the undue prominence given the young. This is bound up with the failure to train and teach the young at home according to the teaching of the Word.

Not much is said concerning the young in the Scriptures. One of the ten commandments, "Honor thy father and thy mother," etc., is repeated and commented on by Paul in Eph. 6:1-3. The fourth verse contains instructions to fathers, viz., to chasten and instruct but not to irritate their children. These same commands are practically repeated in Col. 4:20, 21, with this change, nothing is said about instruction, etc., but they are not to "provoke" them "lest they be discouraged."

It has come to be so noticeable as to be frequently commented on that decided family discipline is very rare. What little there is that might be called discipline is generally of a thoughtless, impulsive nature, and that only to the very little ones who irritate the parent by their constant little misdemeanors. The very word "punishment" is losing its legitimate meaning. When they get to be twelve years old or so they practically are their own masters.

It was a good thing that in our grandfather's time the young were taught to "be silent in the presence of their elders," to take off their cap on passing them on the village street, and to always speak with certain respectful formulas. But now they mostly do "just as they're a-mind to."

In trying to impress upon an intelligent but unruly boy of ten the necessity of obeying his father and mother, he suddenly looked up with nervous intensity and asked: "Why! can't grown-up folks do just as they're a-mind to?" O parents, you are providing

material for the jails and penitentiaries; worse, you are bring up your children to make Unitarians. The great Law-giver evidently intended that respect for family law should tend to make respect for civil law, and that in turn to lead to respect for the higher law of God.

As to the position of young people in the gatherings of Christians about the only teaching we find in the epistles on the subject is in I Pet. 5:5, "Let the younger be subject to the elder," though this is probably a general statement referring to both family and church. But the unscriptural position in the churches now is in keeping with the general tenor of the age, as in other things, whereas the Scripture command stands, "Be not conformed to this present world" (age). The forming of young people into societies by themselves is hastening the general world-conformity of the whole mass.

It began back with the Y. M. C. A. from a failure to see the intent of the Spirit in regard to the conduct of the church in the world. If they had they would see that the making of separate societies of different classes of Christians is, and can be, only detrimental to the keeping of the "bond of unity" in the church.

This binding together of Christians is of utmost importance in the mind of the Spirit; Col. 2:2, etc., "being knit together in love," and therefore whatever tends to break it up is exceedingly hurtful. It seems to be one of the main efforts of the Adversary's work to separate Christians. Thus separating classes of Christians is part of it; also the rich having their churches and the poor having theirs.

In many places now the young people "run" the churches. The writer was in a week-night meeting recently, which, by the way, was being led by a young lady contrary to the teaching of the Word. At the close of the meeting, on asking why there were so few middle aged and elderly people present he was answered: "We give them a cordial invitation, but they don't seem inclined to come."

The elder thus allow the younger to usurp authority!

The young people having such a "good time" in the church are thereby enticing others in, who join easily by a slight or false profession of faith in Christ.

For to "become a Christian," as it is called in these days, there is no denying the world, but receiving its "pat on the back" and its commendation "That's right."

And as to the "endeavors" of the young in so-called Christian work; of course it is an utter misconception of the duties and privileges of the true Christian as set forth in the epistles.

Christians also in conducting their assemblies question, "What are others doing?" instead of, What does the Word of God teach?

That makes them "carnal" Christians and consequently without discernment. They seek to introduce "institutional work" because other churches do, and are apparently successful. So Christians are occupied with the work in their particular church or denomination instead of being occupied with the Lord Jesus and His work concerning the church (His body) as a whole now and in the future.

Also they are more occupied with their *work* than their individual *walk* in relation to the Lord Jesus and His Word. Yet in the epistles much more is said concerning walk than work. Such Christians are ever occupied with the "ways and means," and never come to the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Like Philip, to whom the Lord said, "Have I been so long time with you and yet thou has not known Me?" Ever learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

If they have a faithful teacher they pronounce him "unpractical, teaching too deep theological matters, preaching over their heads," etc. In fact Christians seem more interested in what some great preacher or eminent professor thinks than what the Word of God says.

How many there are who cannot bear to hear their pet preacher criticised. "Oh, don't say a word against Professor So-and-So. I think his sermons or writings are just splendid. I won't listen to anything against him."

When the allegiance is thus given to this or that Reverend, to some Professor D. or E., to "my pastor," or some favorite religious author, there cannot be the single eye, the simple heart allegiance, and above all, which is so necessary, the spiritual discernment to perceive and receive, and rejoice in the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It seems thus that God is being slowly thrust out from His own temple ("which temple ye are") and the "man

of sin," *i. e.*, fallen man himself, gradually taking his place. Man is recognized in everything more and more. Even in redemption and salvation man's side of the matter is only recognized to the entire neglect of the Godward aspect of it. And the work, too, has to be done in man's approved way, instead of God's appointed way.

It seems thus as if antichrist was about to be revealed, for he comes before Christ.

It will be Satan's last and greatest effort to deceive the world. For we are taught in 1 Thess. that the "lawless one" comes with all deceitfulness and lying wonders (miracles). So it seems that Satan will put forth his antichrist as a sort of ante-substitute in place of Christ, as the "coming man" who will propose to swing the nations of the world, who will willingly yield to his sway, into a kind of happy state of political and social perfection.

The world is preparing for it, and Christendom is blindly helping it on.

Satan is trying to forestall much of the Lord's redemptive work in the coming age.

For instance, the great advance in science and discovery of the past fifty years, seems like the extra energy put forth by him at the close of this age. This high state of civilization is considered by many as the "kingdom come." It is probably Satan's substitute for the millenium of Christ's reign.

Men, it would seem, have snatched beforehand, somewhat, "the powers of the age to come." But it is not for their good. Fallen man entrusted with these superior

powers, uses them selfishly, and not helpfully. Satan, nevertheless, persuades men that it is a "wonderful advance," a "golden age" is just to dawn.

But it stands the Lord's people in hand not to be deceived, but "wait for His Son from heaven." For the hope of the church is the Lord Jesus Himself, who will as the true "Coming One" suddenly return to earth, and consume the "lawless one" "with the brightness of His forthshining."

Then set up His righteous kingdom,—a redeemed people on a redeemed earth, where holy people can use these wonderful powers and more, too, not for selfish purposes but helpfully and for the glory of God.

Although God is tolerating this wickedness in the world now, it is no sign of His complacency or approval. What has gone forth from His mouth, He will bring to pass. His promises and threats can alike be relied upon. He will judge the world "by that Man whom He hath appointed," even the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is written "things highly esteemed among men, are an abomination in the sight of God." The precepts and principles of the reforms of this world are highly esteemed by the men of this age, and are believed to be able to bring about all good eventually when fully worked out. Not so is God's estimation of them. He has said definitely "this world (age) will be destroyed and the works that are therein will be burned up." There are scoffers concerning these things just as the Holy Spirit testified there would be. But with a world at ease, and world and church alike seemingly saying,

“Where is the promise of His coming?” and “Where is the God of judgment?” is it not high time that the church arouse from slumber and plainly speak forth its warning?

Not only from the lips of the preacher, but by the obedience of Christians as individuals and also in the Scriptural conduct of their assemblies.

We are nearing undoubtedly the close of the age, and the “trying times” have “set in” that the Holy Spirit testified would surely come. It is a matter of utmost importance to Christians, especially to the rising generation of young believers, to have these “devices” of the devil clearly shown up, and to get a fresh standing on the Word of God. For the young seem to be losing their grip on the fact that the Bible is indeed the Word of God. The great familiarity with the mere text of the Scriptures has undoubtedly much to do with the breaking down of the realizing sense among the rising generation of its being indeed the Word of God, and so authoritative.

Another bad result from the evils enumerated, is the difficulty of discerning the true or really regenerate from the false or unregenerate, in the great mass designated “church members.”

There is no class of sinners in such danger, and in such need of heeding the warnings of Scripture, as these imitation Christians, for the hypocrite will meet with the heaviest condemnation at the bar of God, *i. e.*, those “having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof.”

How deceived are those masses of unsaved persons who are allowed and urged to "attend church" while remaining unbelievers. But they are invited to "join in the service" and "worship with us" and help by contributing, etc.

They think that somehow there is some good in thus "attending church."

Dressed in their best, they feel very "respectable," and reason that if Christians are labeled as "good," why should n't they be!

The trouble is, the church hardly shows anything more than a well-dressed respectability before the world. And how should the worldling discriminate?

How fearful then is the criminality of the church in thus helping to deceive sinners! This is again one of the dire results of public worship.

And even among those truly regenerate, how much, or how little is there rather, of truthful witnessing before the world!

Are they not at best mostly presented to the world as a lot of "good" people? But does not the world misconstrue their "goodness" into self-righteousness; after all is it not largely that indeed?

Where is the Paul-like humility confessing that in his flesh "dwelt no good" and that he was a "chief of sinners?"

Where is the Paul-like renunciation of all self-righteousness? Where is the Paul-like faith and love? Does the world see these things in Christians? Then are Christians faithful witnesses? Does their propriety

and “consistency” glorify the Lord Jesus? And what is this propriety for the most part but conformity to the requirements of refined and good society merely?

How does that in any way glorify Jesus, the Saviour of sinners?

Do Christians now consider pride, greed (or covetousness), and oppression as grievous sins? Is there not excessive dullness of conscience concerning these sins?

How many Christians are living in the practice of fornication and adultery, and even sodomy (unnatural lust between similar sexes)?

How are the public frequently startled by the report of dishonesty by Christians in positions of trust.

In the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, we read that the conditions producing the sin of sodomy in Israel were pride, plenty, and idleness. Does not this state of things exist now? Undoubtedly the wealth of Christians now is one of the most serious menaces to their spiritual welfare. The accumulation of wealth by Christians is contrary to the general teaching of the Word. There are no blessings pronounced on the rich in the epistles to the churches, but only the most serious warnings.

Christian brethren, especially young Christian brethren, it is written, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” And “God is no respec-

tor of persons." If you are a confessed believer in the Lord Jesus and yet are living in any open or covered sin, you surely will have to feel the heavy chastening rod of God, and I would you might be spared, hence this warning.

I pray God that He would lay the spirit of prayer and supplication upon all Christians who see these evils, to separate from them, and pray earnestly and pray together, and pray unceasingly that He would open the eyes of true Christians to these deceptions of the Adversary and cause them to once more stand forth in clear testimony to the truth before Jesus comes again. For it is the general belief of the most enlightened Christians everywhere, that we are very near to the close of this dispensation or age.

Christians should meet by themselves and "break bread" often (the early Christians did so at least every Lord's Day) whether they have a minister or not. There is not a definite command, or even a teaching from which can be got an inference that an officer of the church is necessary to "administer the ordinance." Only the older ones, the "elders," should see that it is done decently and orderly, with reverence "discerning the Lord's body."

Not only is the partaking of the communion of the Lord's supper a command to be obeyed, but it is also very helpful and strengthening to the believer, especially to young Christians; therefore the frequent partaking is very important. The remembrance of Christ thus along with other Christians gives the fellowship

that is so beneficial. Everything that helps to unite by heart Christian brethren, and knit them together in love, is very important. The Holy Spirit urges this in the many commands and exhortations in the Epistles.

The Adversary also knows the value of Christians being closely united, and tries by every means to prevent and break it up.

He has succeeded through the present system existing in the churches to an alarming degree, resulting in coldness and weakness. As coals of fire lose there glow when spread apart, but burn afresh when closely united; so with believers.

But some will say, Does not working together in "church work" tend to unite?

No, not in itself, emphatically no.

They may be and many times are closely associated in work, and at the same time their hearts are eaten out with jealousy, envy, hatred, and strife. Do not such things grieve and quench the Spirit?

The present system is largely the cause, of which these things are the inevitable result.

And the leaders will be held responsible, for do they give sufficient, if any, warning? How can they, while so blinded and enchained by the ecclesiastical evils they are maintaining and upholding? They are first and foremost in the deceptive toils of the Adversary. May God deliver them out of the snare of the Evil One, that they with others "may be recovered who now are taken captive by him to do his will." "Awake to righteousness and sin not," is the exhortation of the Spirit.

Not that "perfection" is to be expected, either in the individual Christian or the assembly, for that cannot be as long as Christians are in the body.

But if they really have allegiance to God's Word in their heart, their "faith" ought to be "shown by works." So that they should witness against this gross departure, and show their own renewed obedience.

Of course it cannot but be expected that any intelligent reader or student of the Word will have opinions and inferences in his own mind, where the Scripture wording is obscure, concerning some ecclesiastical practices. But that is very different from making these opinions into set and authoritative church "ordinances" and "vows," making them binding upon Christians. It works harm, and must necessarily. It makes Christians with a morbidly sensitive conscience, despondent over their failures to keep them; and others with a dull conscience, careless and reckless. Especially as these binding vows are not accompanied by the helpfulness that would enable Christians to better keep them.

Wherein is Protestantism a whit different from Romanism in assuming such authority? Practically saying, whatever the Church binds or loosens, God ratifies. (Christ in giving the "keys" to Peter, called them "keys of the kingdom of heaven," not of the Church: the two are quite distinct. Christ was here, as elsewhere, evidently addressing the disciples as *Jewish* believers; related some way to that Jewish "regeneration" yet future.)

There are Christian "Brethren" the world over who meet in assemblies without any such vows and ordinances, and are they any less orderly or lacking in discipline therefor? Not in the least, as far as the writer knows.

The Word of God is the true light for the present darkness, as much as at any previous time in the Church's history.

For God has declared, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please; and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Therefore Christian teachers and preachers need not fear to proclaim "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," with all its blessed doctrines, nor timidly refrain from mentioning some, for fear it will do harm. If they could do harm, He would not have caused them to be written.

Undoubtedly it will offend some, probably many; for "the offence of the cross" has not ceased, although the proclaiming and living it well nigh has. It always has offended from the time of the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul down, wherever it has been faithfully proclaimed; and the only reason it does not at the present day, is, not that human nature is more tolerant, but that the gospel is so altered and trimmed, and

offensive doctrines suppressed or explained away, that it is not fairly presented to the world.

The Church has ceased to give offence, to be sure, but along with it has come the sad condition of *extreme spiritual poverty* among nearly all classes of Christians.

Let Christians renew their obedience to the Spirit's commands as set forth in the epistles to the churches, unhampered and uninfluenced by the *traditions of men*, and there will undoubtedly follow spiritual health and strength to many that now languish and faint, and a continual "adding to the Lord" "of such as are ordained to eternal life."

LOVE.

THE GREATEST THING IN THE CHURCH.

In the epistles of both Paul, Peter, and John this is prominently set forth. John is called the "loving disciple," and some might claim that he pre-eminently shows forth this doctrine. But no, Paul is the leader. Evidently Paul was not like John, naturally affectionate or loving. On the other hand, it is hard to conceive of John as persecuting even heretics, nor was he of the same forceful nature as Paul. All goes to show, however, that Paul's great love was not his own, but the "love of God shed abroad in his heart," that worked out in the yearning, laboring, and suffering he so eminently exhibited throughout his Christian career in behalf of the Christian converts the Lord Jesus had given him, whom he frequently calls his children.

In the epistle to the Romans, in the opening chapter, is shown his yearning love for those Christians in his unceasing prayer for them. In the first verse of the tenth chapter is seen his great desire for the salvation of his own nation; also 11:14 shows the same. In the closing chapter there are several exhortations to

love the brethren, viz., 12:9, "love without dissimulation;" 10th verse, . . . "in honor preferring one another;" 13:8, "owe no man anything but to love one another;" 10th verse, "love is a fulfilling of the law."

The last verses of the 14th chapter are an exhortation to regard the welfare of other brethren, and not one's own ease and comfort, continuing in the first seven verses of the 15th chapter. Note Paul's tender regard for others' rights in the matter of preaching, in the twentieth verse. In the 16th chapter are instances noted of those who have in love risked their own lives for Paul's sake.

In I Cor. 4:14, he warns Christians as "beloved sons," etc. In the first verse of the eighth chapter he says "knowledge puffeth up but love buildeth up." Then follows the exhortation to have a regard for the weak consciences of other Christians, closing in the thirteenth verse with that loving vow not to offend "my brother." In 11:22, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some;" what an exhibition of self-sacrificing love! Also 10:33, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many," etc. The 13th chapter is the strongest passage in all his epistles setting forth the important place of "love" in the "Body of Christ," the church. "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Some in commenting on this verse have declared that it states that the greatest thing in the world is love. Perhaps it

is the greatest thing "in the world," but this Scripture does not say so.

In the previous chapter is stated the oneness of the "Body" with its various "gifts" through the indwelling Spirit; then the 13th chapter is the culmination of the argument, showing that "love" is over and above all gifts and knowledge—and even when these shall have passed away there remaineth these three graces, and the greatest of them is "love"—evidently in the church.

In the fourteenth verse of the last chapter is the exhortation, "Let all your things be done with love."

In the second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 2:4, he speaks of his writing "with many tears . . . that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you."

That "wicked person" (the fornicator) had to be put away from among them, but now, having undoubtedly repented, they are to receive him and "confirm their love toward him."

In 8:4 is a marked exhibition of the working of real love in those Christians; in fact the first fifteen verses of the chapter show the spirit of Christian love in the liberal giving to needy brethren. And yet no one burdened, but "by an equality" those helped at one time become the helpers at another time. Notice twice in the chapter (verses eight and twenty-four) the necessity of proving of love is spoken of. Then the whole 9th chapter is a continuation of this particular subject of ministering to saints as an emphatic way of

showing Christian love. Then follow two or three incidental remarks showing Paul's personal burning love toward the Christians he has espoused to Christ, *e. g.*, 11:9, . . . "in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself;" and twenty-eighth verse, in all his troubles he still bore the burden of the care of the churches. And note the minute detail of his love, "Who is weak, and I am not weak (in sympathy), who is offended (injured or stumbled), and I burn not?" Also in 12:15, he gladly spends and is spent for them, though the more abundantly he loves, the less he is loved. This evidently is not merely natural tenderheartedness—it is the love of God shed abroad in his heart. In verse nineteenth see how careful he is that everything he does should be for their building up.

In his letter to the Galatians is the same personal love shown and the same teaching of love to the brethren. He says: "My little children . . . by love serve one another," "Bear ye one another's burdens," etc. And 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of the faith." For they were to have faith which worked by love.

The doctrine of love to the brethren as being of first importance is put forth very pointedly in the epistle to the Ephesians. In the first place Paul gives thanks for their "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." Further exhortations to love are seen in 4:2, "With all lowliness and meekness with long-suffering,

forbearing one another in love;" fifteenth verse, "Speaking the truth in love . . . maketh increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love;" thirty-second verse, "And be ye kind one to another," etc.; 5:2, "walk in love," etc; twenty-first verse, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ" (humility of love).

In the epistle to the Philippians he opens with the prayer that their "love may abound yet more and more," etc. Then in 2:2-4 the lowliness of love is set forth, giving Christ himself as an example. Now in the opening of the epistle to the Colossians, we find again as in Ephesians, Paul gives thanks to God for their "faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints." This surely is worthy of remark and close attention, for in such a place as the opening salutation we might rightly expect to find something of emphatic import. He would speak of things of first importance, not of slight import. What do we find? He does not speak of their zeal in work of any kind, whether for the salvation of souls or otherwise. But instead, these two things are constantly emphasized, faith and love.

We may well inquire,—Is, then, the greatest thing in the church, working for the salvation of souls? Is it the first and greatest command? The fact is, upon searching the epistles carefully, nothing can be found as an exhortation or command to that effect, but instead this oft-repeated command, "Love one another."

Paul's love for the Colossian Christian is incidentally shown in 1:24, his sufferings being for the sake of the

church. In 2:2 he desires that their hearts may be "knit together in love," and verse 19 the body of believers being thus "knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." In 3:12-16 is again shown the necessity of the humility of love.

In the opening of the epistle to the Thessalonians, he "remembers" their "work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope," things evidently of first importance. In 3:6 we see he is greatly comforted upon Timothy bringing news of their faith and love, and in the twelfth verse he prays that their "love may increase and abound one toward another and toward all," etc. In 4:9-12 he desires that they increase more and more in loving one another.

Again, in the opening of his second epistle he thanks God that their "faith groweth exceedingly and the love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." The next verse speaks of their patience and faith, but nothing about work. Paul's own tender regard for them is shown incidentally in both epistles: first 2:9 and second 3:8, in his laboring night and day so as not to be a burden to them.

In the pastoral epistles to Timothy, Paul still sets forth "love" prominently. In 1:5, "the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart," etc.; verse fourteen, "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

In 1:16-18 he speaks of the love of Onesiphorus (which means "yielding profit") in ministering to him (Paul) both in Rome and Ephesus, seeking him out

very diligently and finding him. How often are Christians found now "seeking out very diligently and finding" other Christians in need and ministering to them? Undoubtedly there are many having the Spirit, and who would be willing to; but they are not taught that this is a thing of great importance, but rather their attention is kept on the supposed need of supporting some particular local church, or that their teaching a Sunday-school class or mission class is the all-important thing. But really, were the inspired epistles given for our guidance or not? It would seem by the way these commands are ignored, that they were not.

The short epistle to Philemon is a gem just sparkling with the love and tender regard of Paul's spirit filled with the love of God. And here again he thanks God for the "love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints." The slave Onesimus now becomes the "brother beloved." Paul's pleading for him in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses is very tender. In the epistle to the Hebrews there is not much doctrine concerning personal conduct; but yet one or two passages are very plain. In 6:10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister." Also in the last chapter, first, third, and sixteenth verses, "Let love of the brethren continue," "But to do good and communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." In Acts 20:18, 35 Paul rehearses to the Ephesian Elders his work and manner of conduct

among them. All going to show his zeal, to be sure, but also his tender-hearted love toward them in a most wonderful degree. Paul is evidently so burning with love to the saints, that his speaking of it so often cannot savor of egotism. A man who could so suffer for others, and labor night and day to relieve them of the burden of his support, and who is so quick to notice and willing to recognize the loving ministrations of others cannot be suspected of any hypocrisy in his statements in regard to his own love.

In James's epistle the same doctrine is taught as 2 : 1, the not making any distinction between the rich and the poor in the Christian assembly. And in 4 : 11, to avoid evil speaking of one another. In praying for one another, etc., and in "converting" the "erring brother."

In Peter's first epistle the doctrine is emphasized by several passages; though Peter never speaks of his own love to the saints. In 1 : 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart fervently," and in 2 : 17, "love the brotherhood," and in 3 : 8, "Finally be ye all of one mind having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, courteous," etc. In 4 : 8, 10, "And above all things have fervent love among yourselves. . . . Use hospitality one to another. . . . As every man hath received the gift, minister the same one to another," etc., also 5 : 5, . . . "all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility," etc.

Peter's love for Paul is shown in his second epistle, 3:15, showing he held no ill will toward him, though Paul had "withstood him to the face" at one time.

In John's epistles the doctrine of loving the brethren is made of first importance also. In his gospel he records the Lord Jesus giving of his "new commandment," repeating it three times. So again in the epistles he repeats it three times, besides continual reference to it in many other passages.

It seems that the utmost emphasis was intended by the Spirit to be given to this subject of "love," being the thing of first importance in the church.

Jude's short epistle contains no statement of doctrine, but merely showing the culmination of evil in Chistendom ("leaven" fully worked) and impending judgment.

So we see that by taking the consensus of all the epistles, the doctrine of loving the brethren is no mere exhortation of slight moment, but a command of first importance, indeed the first. The churches, leaders, and teachers have not so taught, do not so teach. There has been a departing from the Word here also, and a following of the traditions of men instead. In considering any matter whatever it is very important to have correct definitions.

Now in this matter it must not be supposed that Scriptural or Christian "love" is the same thing as in earthly relations,—as parental or filial love, or the strong sentiment between "lovers." Much less is it mere affection as felt between friends; nor still less mere animal affectionateness.

We have a definite statement of what it is in that passage in I John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we love" . . . ("of God" is not in the original Greek), as if it said, here is a sample of real love, "in that He, (*i. e.*, the Lord Jesus), laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In a word then, Christian love is having at heart the welfare of other Christians, and willingness to work for that end, even to the extent of suffering some loss or inconvenience one's self. More than that even to the loss of one's own life if necessary.

Christians although saved as to their future life, yet need "saving" in many ways in this life; hence the many commands in the epistles to that effect, briefly comprehended in "ministering to the saints."

There has been a time in the church's history when "faith" has received special emphasis. Then a time when the "hope" had especial emphasis. Now it seems as if it was high time that the last and greatest of the three, *viz.*, "love," should be emphasized in the church.

Not merely by preaching about it, or writing Bible-readings or black-board exercises on it, but by living it in acts of necessary work; obeying these scores of commands given by the Holy Spirit in the epistles. How is allegiance or obedience to the Holy Spirit shown? By obedience to these written commands.

Not by obeying the vagaries of an "inward voice," mistakenly supposed to be the "voice of the Spirit." The Adversary can produce such "voices," or they

may be simply out of one's own mind, and that is probably what they generally are.

Fellow Christian reading this, whoever you may be, beloved of God, make this a personal matter, bringing it before God in prayer, asking him to direct you in your "ministering." He will lead mostly by what might be termed providential circumstances, bringing you face to face with things needing to be done. Only one must have quick perception to see, and the willing heart to do at the moment. "Do good unto all, especially unto them of the household of faith."

"By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

RAISED WITH CHRIST.

We thank thee our most ^{as} gracious Lord,
For love that drew ~~us~~ with a cord,
The net of grace that took us in
And cleansed us from our guilt and sin.

Thy love in Christ shall never end,
But to eternal ages, lend
The strength and sweetness of the song,
That to Thy risen saints belong.

For raised from death, no more to die,
We shall in glory, by and by
(When Thou dost come to take thy place
As Head of the redeemed race),

Be raptured up; then as thy own
Blood-purchased Bride, wilt share thy throne.
And through the coming ages show
What wondrous grace thou could'st bestow.

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Coming judgment.



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